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Legislation to make renewable fuels widely available sent to gov

LANSING – A package of bills to promote and make renewable fuels more widely available in Michigan has been sent to the governor, said bill sponsors Sens. Jud Gilbert and Cameron Brown.

"Michigan needs to be at the forefront in the quest to provide consumers with alternatives to regular gasoline," said Gilbert, R-Algonac. "Making renewable fuels available at more locations around the state will help promote these cheaper energy sources such as ethanol and biodiesel."

The legislation is designed to help spur growth in Michigan's agriculture industry and promote and encourage use of E85, a fuel blend that is 85 percent ethanol, and biodiesel, a diesel fuel containing at least 5 percent biodiesel. Ethanol is a clean burning high octane fuel primarily produced today from corn kernels. Biodiesel is a cleaner burning diesel fuel made from natural renewable sources such as soybean oil.

"Promoting alternative energy sources is good for our economy, our farmers and our environment," said Brown, R-Fawn River Township, chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture. "These bills will help make ethanol and biodiesel more readily available, more affordable, and more reliable."

The renewable fuel package will:

- Provide a motor fuel tax cut on the purchase of renewable fuels. The tax break gives seven cents off the 19-cent motor fuel tax on E85 or three cents off the 15-cent motor fuel tax on diesel fuel containing at least 5 percent biodiesel;
- Set strict quality-control standards for biodiesel and hydrogen fuels, and require diesel fuel testing in Michigan;
- Require the state to install a fueling infrastructure at the Lansing state fleet garage and require all state flex fuel vehicles to fill up with E85 and diesel vehicles to use a biodiesel blend; and
- Amend the Michigan Renaissance Zone Act by creating 10 alternative energy targeted renaissance zones.

Although GM and Ford are heavily investing in the production of E85 vehicles, there are only four pumps dispensing the fuel in Michigan, while Minnesota has 198 pumps and Illinois has 104 pumps statewide.